

## **Patients, health providers try alternative treatments Practices offer acupuncture, massage**

**By ERIN CONCORS TRIBUNE -- CONTACT WRITER: (480) 970-2312 or econcors@aztrib.com**

From acupuncture treatments to Chinese herbal therapy, alternative medicine and traditional Oriental medicine are gaining popularity as a viable way to treat disease, complementing Western medicine, said Valley health experts.

"This is a medicine that is over 3,000 years old. Physicians never used lab tests or X-rays to convince everyone that this is right; instead, they used observation and nature," said Bonny Phyfield, dean of RainStar University's College of Oriental medicine in Scottsdale. "It's a holistic therapy."

Enrollment has increased at RainStar and Southwest College of Naturopathic Medicine in Tempe during the past five years, as more students choose careers in alternative medical fields. Local hospitals and medical centers are integrating complementary medicine such as acupuncture and massage into their clinical practices at patients' request.

"This is truly a patient-driven market, and people nowadays are more educated about their choices," said Daniel Rubin, a naturopathic doctor practicing oncology at the East Valley Regional Cancer Center in Chandler.

Scottsdale Healthcare has incorporated complementary therapies into patient programs at its Virginia G. Piper Cancer Center, including drumming sessions, art therapy and journal-writing workshops. Officials at Mercy Gilbert Medical Center, currently under construction and slated to open in March 2006, are planning to offer alternative medical services to patients, said spokesman Paul Szablowski.

Recent media attention highlighting the use of complementary therapies may be contributing to their popularity, said Arizona State University professor Michael Winkelman, a medical anthropologist specializing in alternative medicine.

Plus, as HMOs and insurance companies compete for clients, they have added coverage for alternative therapies to maintain their patient bases, he said.

RainStar offers certification and degree programs in acupuncture, Oriental medicine and therapeutic massage. Students are trained in using Chinese herbs, Thai massage, craniosacral therapy, reflexology and sports massage. Southwest College is an accredited naturopathic medical school in Tempe. Students must have a bachelor's degree and premedical background to apply, said president Dr. Paul Mittman. They are trained in such studies as therapeutic

nutritional medicine, botanical medicine, homeopathy and pharmacology, graduating with four-year doctor of naturopathic medicine degrees.



TO THE POINT: Bonny Phyfield, dean of Oriental medicine at RainStar University, uses acupuncture as a healing tool.  
PHOTOS BY PAUL O'NEILL, TRIBUNE



**GOOD SMOKE:** Without touching the skin, Bonny Phyfield, dean of Oriental medicine at RainStar University, uses smoke along with acupuncture as healing tools.